

Agent Joins in Bu To Nail Dope Tra

THE MAR 25 1954

(One of the largest dope crackdowns in the history of this area occurred last month when 106 dealers and addicts were arrested by federal, state and local police. Their campaign was successful because a young Oakland policeman volunteered to forsake the protection of his uniform and go undercover. This is the first of a series on undercover work.)

By RALPH CRAIB

The burglary was planned for 8 p.m.

And almost to the minute, in the chilly winter darkness of December 27, two men left the sedan parked near the high wire fence at 21st and Adeline Streets.

Their figures were silhouetted momentarily by the stray beams of the corner street light as they went over the top of the barbed wire and dropped silently to the freight yard. The fleet of trucks in the parking area were well stocked, ready to go on their runs in the morning.

Two men sat in the car parked outside. One was cool, calmly awaiting the report of what the men inside found.

FIRST BURGLARY

The other fidgeted nervously, his hands sweating coldly. It was his first burglary. Police officers aren't usually involved in that sort of thing.

Patrolman Robert E. Prentice, a 25-year-old former paratrooper, is the kind of guy who can take care of himself. And that was why he found himself working as a burglar two days after Christmas last year.

Prentice was sized up by Oakland vice squad officer Joel Taylor, the narcotics expert of the local Police Department, as ideal for undercover investigation. Prentice can be rough, he thinks fast, and was willing to take more than the usual policeman's share of chance in the war against crime.

Prentice was assigned from Northern Division on November 16 to the vice squad. His work and the work of an anonymous federal narcotics agent resulted in a crushing blow at local dope traffickers nearly three months later.

At 4 o'clock of the afternoon of the day he became a burglar, Prentice and Avilla were walking on Broadway near 10th St. They were looking for somebody Avilla said could supply heroin.

Apparently by accident they met Clinton (Boisie) Anderson, 24, of Alameda, and another man, two friends of Avilla. Both were interested in the fact that Prentice had a car.

Within minutes after they met, Anderson, and the other, an ex-convict, asked the policeman if he wanted to go on a job, the burglary of the Kellogg Drayage Company parking lot at 1945 Adeline St. It would be a cinch, they said, one swing of a jack, handle would take care of the guard and the trucks usually had dozens of cases of whisky in them.

TIPS OFF POLICE

Prentice stalled for time and said he would pick up the three at 7:30 p.m. He had time to make only one phone call to Taylor at the vice squad offices. They agreed hurriedly that officers at the burglary would nab only Anderson, and the ex-con; that Prentice and Avilla would be allowed to make a "getaway" because the officer's usefulness under cover would be ended if it became known he had tipped police.

Inspectors Gilcrist (Dinty) Moore and Ted Brown were on hand with Taylor and Sgt. William Plumber, head of the vice squad, hidden in the shadows of the trucking lot when the pair came over the fence. Other Central Division officers were nearby.

Ten minutes after the men

the big roundup. He helped Prentice to make additional buys of heroin before that and is now awaiting sentence on a guilty plea.

But the one reason Prentice remembers him most was for what happened right after their getaway. The patrolman was nervous during the burglary—even though he knew police would close in.

Avilla wasn't disturbed that his friends had just been caught. "Let's drive out to El Cerrito, man," he said. "I got a friend who's out of town now and we can steal his record player and television set."

(Tomorrow Making a Dope "Buy")

'BUYS THE STUFF'

In that time, he made "buys" of "the stuff," heroin, from some 34 separate "dealers," almost all of whom are now confined. Prentice became a good customer and a good "friend" to scores of addicts—and that's how he found himself uncomfortably involved in a felony, breaking and entering.

In the course of his prowls about West Oakland, Prentice met a personable young man named Don Avilla, one of whose lesser failings was a willingness to confide all to anyone who showed interest.

Avilla's major faults included a variety of tendencies, all of them defined in the penal code. He sold heroin, rolled drunks, liked to plan holdups and was a burglar, he subsequently told Prentice.

He was most helpful to Prentice, helped him make repeated buys of "H" and introduced him to "all the guys."

Those introductions resulted in the invitation to the burglary and Prentice had no way to back

were over the fence, the officers closed in. Avilla had become impatient and left the car to check up, to see what was happening. He almost ruined the plan to let him escape.

GANG SCATTERS

One of the officers blasted a shotgun into the air as he shouted halt at Anderson and his friend. They scurried for cover in the coal-black shadows of the big trucks. Avilla came running back to the getaway car and Prentice drove away as if he, himself, were facing a burglary sentence.

"What's the matter with that bebop inspector, man?" Anderson asked when officers found him cowering under a truck, "shooting that gun. He gonna kill a man over a little burglary?"

Anderson and the other nabbed suspect could only be charged with trespassing because their burglary was interrupted before they had entered any of the big trucks, and because Prentice couldn't yet testify against them.

Avilla's arrest came later in

Agent Feigns 'Tea' Habit To Trap Peddler of Dope

By RALPH CRAIB

The customer sniffed apprehensively at the little paper packet, suspicious that it contained only harmless milk sugar and not the heroin he was paying for.

There was only one way to find out then and there if the stuff was good. He drew a small automatic from his coat pocket and jammed it in the dealer's face.

The dealer was Ernest (Goldfront) Styles, so named for the improvements on his bridge work, and the skeptical customer was Robert E. Prentice, a 25-year-old Oakland policeman on a vice squad undercover assignment.

"The powder just didn't look right," Prentice says, "and I had been warned that Goldfront would try to pass phoney stuff on me. I just couldn't see paying out the taxpayer's money for counterfeit heroin."

MAKES A DEAL

Prentice met Styles through an informer and made a deal to buy a \$10 "paper," the small packet about the size and shape of a fat paper clip which is the usual amount handled by heroin retailers in the Oakland narcotics trade.

"He was pretty upset when I waved the gun at him," Prentice says. "We were sitting in my car, parked in the middle of Seventh St. while the track removal was under way. I told him that if the stuff didn't 'move me,' I'd come back and get him."

Goldfront left the car hurriedly, assuring his new customer that he'd check on the heroin quality and return with his report within five minutes. The officer couldn't see where the frightened dealer went — but Goldfront was back within the deadline to say, "This stuff is good, man."

PASSED TEST

That report was later backed up by State laboratory tests. The stuff was good. Styles is doing a year in jail for selling it.

Styles was only one of the scores of dealers and addicts Prentice set up for the arrests in February in raids that rendered him useless for further

(The work of a young Oakland policeman, who forsook the protection of his uniform to go undercover for three months, resulted last month in the largest crackdown ever made against dope addicts here. State, federal and local authorities made more than 100 arrests in coordinated raids against heroin dealers and addicts. This is the second article of a series dealing with undercover work of local officers.)

undercover work. His identity as a policeman was revealed in the raids and they brought an end to three months of his strange double life.

The narcotics underworld was quick to retaliate. Within days of the raid, Prentice came out of his East Oakland home to find that the windows of his car had been smashed and its upholstery slashed. It cost more than \$450 to repair.

The addicts and peddlers had reason to know that car. Seven of them had a nine-hour party in it while Prentice was their "good buddy."

Prentice met the seven "tea heads," (marijuana smokers) at a West Oakland bar. They wanted to smoke in privacy and decided his car was the ideal place. For their benefit—and because he couldn't avoid it—he drove the party from Oakland to Walnut Creek and Dublin, back to Oakland, then to Vallejo and back.

SMOKERS ON JAG

The smokers insisted in keeping all the car's windows tightly closed, Prentice said, to insure full enjoyment of all the smoke in the car. All the group wanted the car radio tuned loudly to bebop jazz—and one of their number beat time loudly on his own set of "bongo" drums in the back seat for almost all of the trip.

The party didn't work out too well as far as the officer is concerned. He obtained the names and descriptions of the seven—but they smoked up all the evidence on which an arrest could be based.

While he was under cover, Prentice stayed away from his fellow officers. He was, he told his new addict "friends," a seaman just in from a trip. He left his hair grow long and wore a mustache.

That disguise apparently

worked perfectly. He was introduced by an addict one day to two other men. One was a man he'd questioned about a burglary while assigned to Eastern Police Station as a uniformed officer.

"You've met Bob here, haven't you?" the addict said to the one-time burglary suspect.

"No, I haven't," the suspect said, looking Prentice in the eye.

"Nice to meet you."

(NEXT: An Earlier Undercover Agent.)

Girl, Couple in Narcotics Net

APR 2 1955

Oakland police today added three persons to their dope suspect roundup.

One of them, Geraldine R. Kee, 21, was taken into custody at her apartment at 1546 Alice St. after a Richmond policeman, acting as an undercover agent, said he had arranged to buy \$2,500 worth of drug store narcotics from her. She is booked at the Oakland city prison "en route to the U.S. Marshal."

Miss Kee wears a neck brace as a result of an automobile accident in March in which a woman companion, Mrs. Dolores Camp, 24, of Sonoma, was killed near Yreka, as they were en route to the McNeill Island Federal Penitentiary in Washington.

MEN IN PRISON

Officers said Mrs. Camp's husband, Donald, and Miss Kee's boy friend, Sam Lind, both are in the prison.

Lind was sent to the federal penitentiary on dope charges.

Police theorize the narcotics were taken in drug store burglaries.

Officer Robert S. Prentice said the young woman is held for the U.S. Marshal because Lind had sold a quantity of narcotics to federal officers, resulting in his arrest, and they believed he had left more in his apartment, which Miss Kee occupied.

Richmond Officer Devere J. Green received the original information and notified Oakland police. Then he and a fellow officer, Louis Stump, came here to make the "buy."

AGENT 'FLASHES ROLL'

He said that when the undercover agent pulled a "flash roll" of currency, the young woman showed him a paper bag containing bottles believed to contain the dope. Her arrest followed.

The arrest was made by Federal Narcotics Agent John Trainor and Oakland Patrolmen Prentice and Don Campbell of the vice squad.

The other two, Joel (Broadway Joe) Dennison, 24, a laborer, and his wife, Anne, 18, an expectant mother of, 1905 Foothill Blvd., were taken into custody at 40th and Ruby Streets at 1 a.m. after police found a tobacco can filled with what appeared to be marijuana at their apartment.

'BROTHER ACT'

Their arrest was due to a "brother act." Officer Robert Prentice told his brother, Traffic Officer Waller Prentice, the couple were wanted and gave him a description of their car. Early today the traffic officer picked them up and held them while he notified his brother and brother officer.

They are regarded by police as associates of six persons taken into custody yesterday.

One of them previously listed as Pat Genero, 18, was disclosed to be Pat Sherman, 17. She has been transferred to Juvenile Hall.

Dennison and his wife are held for investigation of illegal possession of narcotics.

THE FEB 10 1958

OFFICER'S NOSE KNOWS DOPE SMELL; 2 HELD

Patrolman Robert E. Prentice, 29, of the Oakland Police Department vice squad, was off duty and seated in the loge section of a downtown theater during the weekend when he thought he smelled marijuana.

The officer said he got up and began "sniffing around." Sure enough, about 20 feet away he found two men passing a marijuana cigaret back and forth. He arrested them.

Charged with possession of narcotics were Edward Giambruno, 23, of 3238 Morcom Ave., and Harold Dier, 24, of 243 Orange St. They are held in lieu of \$2,000 bail each.

Injured Cop Flown Home for Easter

APR 3 1961

Policeman Robert Prentice is back in his home today, thanks to a Concord pilot who volunteered to fly him to Oakland from a Reno hospital.

Prentice still is in a body cast he's had on since he broke his right leg in a toboggan accident Dec. 30. But the expensive trips his wife had to make through the snowy Sierra to visit him are past.

The 32-year-old Oakland policeman is in a cast from chest to hips and right leg to render his leg completely immobile.

VOLUNTEER FLIGHT

Prentice owes his presence at his home, 5720 E. 17th St., to Warren Boggess of Pacific States Aviation. Boggess volunteered to return Prentice for Easter after he heard of his plight. At Metropolitan Oakland International Airport, a police ambulance took Prentice

from the plane.

Prentice, an Oakland policeman since 1951, was injured while tobogganing with his daughter, Helen, 16, and one of her friends. The family was on a vacation at Prentice's cabin on Highway 50 near Meyers.

THIRD BREAK

Prentice's right leg has been broken twice before—while he was serving as a paratrooper and when he leaped from a toboggan to slow it.

On the latest mishap, Prentice was obliged to wait an hour and a half in the snow before he was taken to Washoe Community Center Hospital. The cast has been changed three times, but its size has not been diminished.

Without Boggess' help, Prentice would have had to return to Oakland by ambulance.